

THE OBLIGATION OF MAN TO OBEY THE CIVIL LAW:  
ITS GROUND, AND ITS EXTENT.

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## A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED DECEMBER 12, 1850,

ON OCCASION OF

THE PUBLIC THANKSGIVING;

IN

THE CHURCH OF THE PILGRIMS,

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

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THE following Discourse has been prepared in the usual course of Pastoral labor, and without reference to its publication through the Press. As it has been solicited for this, however, by a number of those in whose judgment the author is accustomed to confide, and to whom he is united by very affectionate ties, he has not felt at liberty to refuse it. In the very rapid revision which is all that he has been able to give it, he has corrected whatever imperfections have been noticed of expression and statement, and at one or two points has slightly expanded or changed the argument. Sentences are occasionally inserted too, which, owing to the length of the Discourse, were omitted in the delivery.

The author commends what he has written, to the thoughtful regard of those who may be inquiring for Duty and Truth in the department of which it treats; and will be abundantly repaid for the sacrifice which he makes in submitting it to the public, if any such shall be aided by it to just conclusions.

BROOKLYN, Dec. 16th, 1850.

## DISCOURSE.

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MARK xii. 30, 31.—“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”

ACTS v. 29.—“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”

TITUS iii. 1, 2.—“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men.”

I HAVE taken these passages, my Friends, as the theme of my discourse, because they hold within their compass precisely the Doctrine which I shall offer you; not at all because I would use them for immediate impression. They are various passages; not selected from the Scriptures, to the exclusion of others, to teach any narrow and partisan theory, or to carry your conviction in behalf of such theory by the sound of their language,—but selected from the entire range of the instructions of the New Testament, concerning Man's Duty toward God and toward the State. They represent, I think, all the classes of texts that pertain to this subject; and in their combination they set before us what God requires of each among us, with conciseness yet with fullness, and with perfect authority.

They are passages which as examined, in their principles and comprehensively, are nowise inharmonious. They agree entirely in the Doctrine which they teach us; and while they present that Doctrine in its entireness, and unfold it into several of its relations and aspects, they in no

degree break or mar its unity. It is one Doctrine, the same symmetric and crystalline Truth, which we see in all of them; only shedding its light in different directions.—It is no *new* Truth which they present; no Doctrine which has but lately been evolved from their statements. As a received Doctrine among the disciples of Christ, it is older than any of us. It is older than the Independence of these United States. It goes back in its history beyond the date of the Protestant Reformation. It is more ancient than the era of the Martyrs and Confessors. It is as old as Christianity, in its publication or in its being. Nay,—it is as old as the existence of Man, in an organized society, and under the sovereignty of God, his author. There is no other Doctrine more venerable than this, with the hoar of Antiquity. There is none which has gathered a richer inheritance, of association and history; none, to which we are summoned by a nobler army of Witnesses for it; or within which we shall find, as we search into its elements, a higher oneness, a more self-evidencing appeal to the judgment and the conscience, a broader support for the inquirer after Duty. We shall have profitably used this fifth Thanksgiving-Day which we spend together, if we thoroughly master this needed Truth. We should have had no such Thanksgiving, except for its prevalence in past time in our land.

To state it in a single sentence—into which shall be fairly unfolded the meaning of the texts, that we may consider it the more carefully, and may compare it more easily with the scope of the Scriptures—it may be thus expressed: **IT IS THE DUTY OF EACH MAN TO OBEY THE LAWS OF THE STATE, EXCEPT WHERE THEY CONFLICT WITH THE LAW WHICH GOD HAS GIVEN HIM; AND ON THE REALITY OF SUCH CONFLICT HIS CONSCIENCE MUST DECIDE.** It is evident that this is a somewhat unpopular Truth, at the

present. But it is fairly inferrible from the texts which I have read, and harmonious, I believe, with the tenor of the Scriptures. Let us consider it carefully, in each of its particulars.

It is the first and most obvious principle of the Divine Law, in its relation to Man, that every individual is responsible to it; that every individual is bound to obey it. Its language, when God first gave it through his Prophet to his people, from the summit of Sinai, was decisive and plain: 'THOU shalt have no other Gods before me. THOU shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. THOU shalt not kill. THOU shalt not steal. THOU shalt not commit adultery.' Throughout the Law, in each of its ten specific enactments, it is the personal Man, made in God's image, responsible to him, an heir of Eternity, who is personally addressed. It is not the Nation. It is not the company or congregation of men. But it is the Individual, whom God has formed, whom God commands. And so, most clearly, in the New Testament Scriptures, in the passage which I have read as containing the Law; where the Saviour sums up, into one complete and luminous announcement, the Duty of Man. The language is vivid and unequivocal: 'THOU shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and THOU shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'

It is as a Person, complete in himself in the elements of existence and the conditions of responsibility, that Man stands before God, amid his Creation. He is connected with others by acquaintance and sympathy, and by many outward bonds of alliance and fellowship. But he is never *one* with them; as involved in their existence, or partaking their personality. He has his own endowment of faculty; his own sensibility; his own sphere of action; his own ac-

countableness. The soul which God has given him—which is HIMSELF—stands always, in undissevered unity, before its Author. If affined to others by sympathies and regards, it is so affined because distinct from them ; because in its essence entire and personal. Each one of us, each man on earth, is formed in God's image, to live to his glory. On each hath been expended his power and skill. Each one is capable of rendering him service. Each is capable of arising, through the aid which God gives him, into moral assimilation and union to Deity ; of becoming partaker of God's blessedness in the Future ; and of doing his will, after the earth has been dissolved, in the grand and unspeakable offices of Heaven. On each man personally, therefore, God's Law is laid. For each one, personally, Eternity is waiting. By each, in person, shall be met and undergone the inquisition of the Judgment. And each one shall go, for himself and forever, to his Recompense of Reward : he that hath done good, to "Joy unspeakable and full of glory ;" and he that hath done evil, to the Doom that awaits him. —In all his ways, in all his relations, alone or in society, in secret or in public, on the sea or on the land, whatever his condition and whatever his calling, whatever his connection with others his equals—the Man, whom God has made, is subject to his Law. On him, as an individual, its full authority continually presses. The glance of its Executive goes with him in his ways. He cannot disobey it without God's condemnation.

But now this Man, thus formed of God, and personally and always accountable to his Law, is associated with others. He is not in the desert, save by chance or on occasion. He is not severed from his equals by any adamantine resistances, indissolubly though subtly interfused through the air ; nor by any as effective and more spiritual repul-

sions incorporated with the soul. On the other hand, he is always attracted toward men. There are sympathies, affinities, capacities for faith, for dependence and for support, as deep within him as life itself, that impel him toward others, and urge him to seek them. A permanent aptitude for companionship and society is established in his nature. Society, we may say, is indispensable to him. He cannot live happily, progressively, agreeably to the impulses of his spiritual being, except as he lives in companionship with others. He seeks this, as the bird seeks the air for its element, as the web-footed fowl seeks the sea for its pastime; and the force which urges him, is as wide in its reach as the range of the Race.

This social constitution in man, God regards. He could not do otherwise, without denying himself, and contradicting the intimations he has wrought into the soul. He does not otherwise. He provides, in his Providence, a home in society for every man. Each human being, as he comes into life, finds some community established to receive him. He is embosomed in it through childhood. He is trained amid it in youth, for manhood and its endeavors. His intellectual nature, his social affections, his moral constitution, are imbued and unfolded beneath the influences that drop from its establishments and history. He enters his career of meridian activity, within the arrangements, amid the institutions, beneath the laws, which it has organized.—It is the arrangement of God, that he should do so. Society, in this sense—as distinguished entirely from mere isolation and individualism, though as not to be confounded on the other hand with any precise and specific form of government, whether it be Roman, Grecian, American or Turkish—Society, as the shelter and home of man, and the instrument of his welfare, is an Ordinance of God. Having made man with impulses native and quick, that press him



toward this, he furnishes him with it, at his entrance upon life ; and he enjoins him to live in it.

It is a beneficent Ordinance, of Him who made us. The whole history of the Race, defaced and bloody as it has been with all the varieties of crime and fraud, is yet the trophy of the wisdom that establishes Society. It is the indispensable condition of happiness and of progress. Isolate men from one another and they degenerate, inevitably. Put them each by himself, in the desert of the Anchorite, on the pillar of the Stylite, in the cell of the Monk—and they become fanatical, selfish, and rude. They tend towards Barbarism, as the stone towards the centre. The genial humanities, the graceful and delicate sensibilities, the taste for Art, for Letters and for Science—the aptitudes even for a just, humane, and purifying Religion—die out of the soul. It becomes debased and disorganized, as it is not balanced by the equipoise, nor girded by the strength, nor refreshed by the graces, of others around it. The will becomes violent ; the imagination grovelling ; the moral sense coarse ; the affections sluggish. There is no accumulation ; no developement, or advancement. The earth might almost as well have been left to the herbs and the beasts that preceded man—it might almost as well have been left untouched by the Spirit of God, just as it was before the darkness was swept from over it, and the light was poured on its rugged and waste orb—as to have been peopled by a race of men intelligent but isolated, noble in constitution but separate and antagonistic ; united by no sympathies ; compacted into no State. The destined Future—of illumination for the Race, the universal diffusion and establishment of the Truth, the preparation of the earth for the mastership of Christ—could never have been realized through such a system.

It is when society begins, that advancement begins.

With that come the ever-recurring necessities for intercourse ; for the interchange of thought, and of the products of industry ; the opportunities and the calls for the exercise of sympathies—inweaving men as vital bands ; the demands on the intellect, on the moral conviction, on the heroic and achieving yet submissive will. Protections come with society ; alliances, and strength ; the motives to enterprise, and the openings for it ; the stimulations to constant developement and progress ; the impulses and aids towards the attainment of a symmetric and powerful manhood. In its normal state, it girds one around with influences for good. It gradually becomes organic, vital ; having roots in the Past, and a present life. A History and a Usage surround it with their spirit. Religion finds in it a proper sphere for the diffusion of its forces ; and if it come as a Divine and purifying Power, as the Religion of Christ, it sheds beneficent influences abroad. It becomes incorporated into institutions, worships, systems of Faith, historic and ancestral. It gains a vantage-ground from which to reach individuals with more power, and to accumulate influence from age to age. Beneath it Society becomes flexible and strong. Its freedom, generosity, humanity are advanced. It gets muscle, too, and fibre, and the ligaments of power ; in the railways that traverse its land, and the steamships that spread their banner of cloud on all its seas ; in the magical wires that flash intelligence from one end to the other, as if Omniscience had glanced across it ; in all the interlacings of commerce, acquaintance, similarity of pursuits, relationships, legislations, and a common religion. Then every trade, and every profession, and every department of human effort, finds place and welcome. The agriculturist produces. The merchant transfers. The smith and the wright fashion implements for either. The skilful craftsman elaborates the ornaments which wealth

demands. The expounder of the custom and the rule unfolds these to the citizen. The healer of disease administers to the sick. The preacher of the Gospel brings its messages to men. The poet catches his inspirations from the realms of the Unseen, and going up upon the wing of fancy brings back the thoughts that make his pulses keep music as they beat, that shall breathe a new force into other men's hearts. The artist embodies in the marble, or pictures upon the canvass, the visions of Beauty that arise upon his thoughts, and patiently carves for the column of society its decorated capital. The man of wealth distributes of his substance. The poor man gathers from the other's abundance.—All are connected. The lines of a common dependence and a common support frame all into a Whole. The smith is brother to the artist. The man who turns the furrow has fellowship with him who sings to him of Dreamland. The merchant and the mariner, the healer of the sick, the expositor of the Law, all are co-working. And he is intrinsically the highest among them, who contributes the most to the general welfare ; who puts the most force into social advancement.

By such organic Society among men the progress of the Race must be worked out. Out of it there must come—yea, out of it there *shall* come, as it is pervaded and renewed through the Truth—the realization of the state foreseen by Prophets, and certain to Faith ; from which, although so far, we even now may sometimes catch the fragrant breeze, and hear amid the distance Arcadian murmurs ; the state, when violence and oppression shall have ceased on the earth ; when Christ shall reign, the King of men. In its relation to that, God's ordinance of Society as appropriate to man, becomes invested with the grandest importance. The Institution of the State, as a residence and a defence for the persons whom it embraces—of the State, with its

appropriate magistracies, tribunals, and laws,—is a mighty and durable Corner, established of God, upon which rest the good, and the promise, and the hopes of the World! No man may innocently refuse to accept it.

And now it is evident, as we carry forward our thought, that any particular Society which may be organized among men on this general basis, may do many things which the Individual cannot. It may do many things which he has no power to do;—build cities, make treaties, colonize countries, carry on operations upon the national scale. It may do many things which he, as an individual, has no right to do; enact laws for others than himself, establish tribunals, appoint officers, execute penalties. It may do *whatever is necessary to its own preservation and just defence, and to the accomplishment of the good of the members who compose it*; while it does not contravene the Law of its author, or violate the principles of natural equity. If it be needful for the citizens that statutes be made against forgery and theft, or for punishment of slander, the State may enact them. If it be needful that the murderer, having forfeited his rights in the commission of his crime, be imprisoned or be executed, the State may secure him, and enclose him in its dungeons or suspend him upon its gibbet. Whatever is needful for the preservation of the Society in the accomplishment of the well-being of the individuals who compose it, among things that are indifferent or are intrinsically just, that, Society can do; and as an institution of God, for the benefit of Man, its decisions must be respected.

But it cannot go further. It cannot overrule and it cannot annul, for any individual, the principle or the precepts of the Law which God has given him. What one man cannot do in this regard, that the thousands or the millions associated with him—even though they be established in the

permanence of the State—cannot do or attempt. That Law is intrinsically superior to such attempts. As it emanates from God's Authority, it can only be changed by that Authority. As it is the expression of God's Holiness, it cannot be changed while that Holiness stands. As it is adapted, in the wisdom and the goodness of its Giver, to the nature and the condition of him whom it addresses, so it cannot be changed while Man remains. No State has power to annul or amend it. No State can make it binding by a particle the less, on every person embraced within it. No State can ward from any the penalty of transgression.

If it can do this, where is given its authority? Where has God said to man—in what one sentence or fragment of his Word—"This is my Law for you, until the State enjoins otherwise"? Upon what table of stone hath it been traced by Omnipotence, through what august announcement hath it been breathed into expression by the Spirit of Inspiration—"The State is not only my ordinance for man, to advance him in welfare, but it is my vicegerent and representative on the Earth; empowered to enact and decide in my Name, to revoke my announcements and suspend my decrees"? Tell us, if any one can, by what array of miracle and prophecy, by what stupendous theophanies and revelations, what flashings of light out of the excellent glory—over what seas that tossed and glowed beneath the unexpected Splendor, upon what lands that trembled like a wave under the Presence of the Infinite—has so marvellous and so novel an authority been given?—Nay! It has not been given! We know it has not been. Not for a moment, not by a particle, has the Deity entrusted such authority to the State.—The State is his ordinance; and so is the Church. The magistrate and the minister are equally his messengers, for human welfare. But if the minister teach error, God does not accept it. He is not made the endorser of the lie.

His authority is not given to it. Nor is the peril of him who takes it diminished by a jot. And so if the magistrate decrees wrong or does it, God's Law is not changed. The Right, which he commands, is no less real, is no less binding, than ever before. It has not lost an iota of authority; and the guilt and the hazard of transgressing it are not lessened. If the Church, which deals with the articles of our belief, declares to us Untruth instead of Reality—no matter amid what imposing ceremonial, or with what authority of Council and of Conclave,—her mandates are not binding. They break like the flax in the grasp of the flame before the intrinsic Divinity of the Truth. And so if the State, which deals equally with the articles of our action in society, command us to do wrong, if it establish iniquity as our Law, and require us to do not what we would that our neighbor should do to us, but precisely that thing which we would not for worlds he should have power to do to us—its commandments are invalid. It has outstepped its province. It has surpassed its authority. It is an agent who has done what he was not empowered to do. It is a messenger who has given his message untruly. The man who follows it will find it fatal.

This is not strange or doubtful doctrine. The marvel is that in this nineteenth century of Christ it should be needful even to state it; to go back at all to these principles of Religion. It could not have been if men's minds were not perverted by interest or by passion. The truth is so clear that all must see it. Philosophers and moralists have developed it fully; and Jurists themselves have frequently confessed it. Says Calvin; "If Rulers command anything against the Lord, *it ought not to have the least attention.*" Says President Edwards, the younger: "Rulers are bound to rule in the fear of God, and for the good of the people; and if they do not, then *in resisting them we are doing God*

*service."* Says Blackstone himself—that noble expositor of English Law, who united philosophic acumen and dignity with the most elaborate and wide juridical culture: "The Law of Nature, being coeval with mankind, and dictated by God himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at all times; *no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this*; and such of them as are valid, derive all their force and all their authority, mediately or immediately, *from this original.*"—The truth is that the principle is too plain to be gainsaid. Take any illustration that puts it fairly before us, and an intelligent man will not question it a moment. If the State should decree deception as a virtue, that would not make it such. If it should authorise by law the commission of adultery, God still would punish that crime with his penalty. If it should enjoin idolatry, or encourage suicide, or legalize slander,—no matter what it should do of wrong and wickedness—God's Law for Man would not thereby be changed a line. Before all States, existed that Law. Across all States, extends its reach. On every human soul is laid its authority. When States have vanished, it will abide. Throughout Eternity, when all the institutions and the fabrics of earth have been forgotten for ages, it still will stand; in its majesty unimpaired; in its authority inviolable; in its execution certain. The spotless character and the infinite power of God are pledged to its support. Each man whom he has made is rightfully its subject. It will be permanent as his own being.—Wherever another law then contradicts this, this takes precedence. No rule which man has made, can stand before it. The Man who disobeys it—no matter on what inducements, no matter amid what popular acclamations, no matter on what injunction of his fellows in the State—is in peril of the Judgment.

But how shall it be known by Man, that the Law which God has given him is in conflict with the Law which he meets in the State? Through what organ shall it be shown to him that the former requires what the latter forbids; and that therefore obligation to the latter has ceased?—The question deserves our most careful attention.

Wherever the Word of God has directly declared to us, in definite and unmistakeable terms, and in regard undeniably to the act before us, that that particular act is wicked and criminal, and not to be done—there it will probably be agreed that doubt must vanish. We must know, then, what God's Rule is; and knowing it, must obey it, in distinction from every other. But oftentimes this is not so. There are many, they are the most numerous cases, occurring under the administration of Civil Government, where the particular direction of God is not given. This is not accident. It is not oversight. There is purpose and plan in it. It is the chosen method of God—and in it is found an expression of his wisdom—to give to each man, not the minute instructions that shall fit themselves perfectly to all the relations and surfaces of his life, but the general principles of Right and Duty, which he must receive and apply for himself. If God had done the former, the Scriptures,—addressing themselves as they do to all classes and races, in all stages of cultivation, and through all the Ages of human experience, to man and to woman, to the prince, the noble, the merchant, the professional man, the mechanic, the laborer, the beggar, the child, to men in every department of active life, to men under all forms of government and society, and connected in all the most intricate and wide relationships of Life—would have been too voluminous for any mind to grasp and master them. Omniscience might have given them; but Omniscience alone could have ever considered them. The glory of the Scriptures would vanish



at once on such a system. The endless variety and richness, the ever new vivacity and power, which are conjoined with simplicity and perfect unity in this wonderful Word—the blended legislation, narrative, promise, praise, which all shed their light upon Duty and Eternity, to which, as the affluent sources of instruction and impulse, all classes and races may equally come, within which they may find the Spirit of God, and at which they may drink to live forever—these would infallibly have been lost, if precepts and not principles had made the substance of the Scriptures. In the place of them we should have had but a Dictionary of precepts, a Date-book of observances.

By such an arrangement, too, if it had been otherwise practicable, one main design of God in the Scriptures would have been thwarted. That design is to educate the faculty of man, to develope his powers, to enrich his resources of sagacity and wisdom. God does this by giving him principles to apply. He trains him upon the same general method, though on a higher and broader level, which the wise man adopts toward the child whom he would develope. To give precepts merely, would secure at the best but an outward obedience. It would be more likely to enfeeble than to invigorate the subject addressed. God gives him, therefore, the principles and the elements of Duty; the examples of his Word, to instruct in their application; with its promises and its warnings, to impel and to sustain him;—and then he leaves him to apply these for himself, in the particulars of life; to become circumspect, cautious, conscientious and decisive, as he endeavors to apply them, and to gain in sagacity, in manliness and in strength. — There are multitudes of things which we feel to be wrong, about which the Scriptures are silent. Where is gambling condemned in them? Where is forgery? Where is horse-racing, or bear-baiting, or gladiatorial exhibitions? Where, libellous publi-

cation? Where the burning of dwellings? Where the practice which the English Law till recently allowed, of selling a wife in the market? Where, even, is suicide condemned? or the burning of heretics? or the destruction of bibles? or the maiming of children, as the means of a lazy and begging livelihood? The *principles* which condemn these and the like practices, are undoubtedly in the Scriptures, and emphatically laid down. But the things themselves are not referred to.

And now, in regard to any such act which we may suppose to be commanded or justified by the State, and not to be forbidden in terms by God's word, while yet it is felt by the citizen to be wrong,—who shall decide what its character is? Who shall decide—not on its civil legality, remember; its accordance with the statutes or the compacts that surround it, or its desirableness and expediency for the present interests of the State;—but in regard to its *intrinsic and radical Equity*; to its coincidence with the Law of Him who made us?—It is very clear that one of three parties must decide it; unless God shall send an angel to declare it. It must be the State, which has required the act; or, the Church within the State, infallibly inspired to speak in God's name; or, the personal Conscience, in the breast of the Man to whom the Law of God is given, and on whom is laid the requirement of the State. And can we hesitate to say which of these it shall be?

It cannot be the State. For that has in effect decided already, and a subsequent decision will naturally confirm this. To accept the State, too, through its majorities or its officers, as the authoritative interpreter of what Equity and God's Law require of man, would be to say in fact that the State is infallible, or that it is, to the Man whom it addresses, in the place of God; that it, therefore, as related to its subject, can do no wrong; and that what-

ever it requires must be submitted to and be done. It would be to say that just resistance to the State is impossible; that a cause of disobedience can never arise; and that if the State should legalize murder, theft, and the burning of dwellings, these would be right.—Besides: The State, in its intrinsic constitution, is unfit and incompetent to decide a question of moral rectitude, except as a miracle should fit it for the office. It is made up of all men, born within it; with every interest; of every character; the majority of them neither enlightened by the Truth nor regenerate by the Spirit; associated for present advantage and defence. There dwells in the State no inspiration of God. It is not qualified to speak for him. It may measure expediciencies. It may forecast the courses of its probable advancement. But it cannot decide on a question of Equity, for the individual Man. There never has been a State since Time began, upon whose decision in regard to his duty, a Man who felt himself bound to God's Law and in peril of destruction if he did not obey it, would be willing to rest for the guidance of his course. One would decide in one way, another in an opposite; Russia affirming submission to Despotism as the only Law for human action, and America denying the equality of individuals as approaching more nearly the Divine requirement; the England of one age enforcing worship to Mary, and the England of the next age denouncing her devotees. So always, and all the world over. Unless the Law of God for man is as shifting as the winds, as the waves, as the clouds, as mutable as the fluctuations of history and of government,—yea, more; unless, without an absolute permanence it is a creature of circumstances, determined by the temporary interests of the State—that State is not its fit Interpreter to him whom it addresses. He that rests on such decision is following the blind.

But if the State is not the party to interpret this Law,

can the Church take its place? Far more justly, without doubt. For the Church is in theory, at least, select and regenerate. It is composed of those who have been gathered from the State, by their submission to Christ; within whom dwells something of the Spirit of God; upon whose minds shine truths and hopes unfelt by others; and who have thus gained in capacity for deciding upon duty. The Church, too, is not so liable as the State to be biassed in its decision by mere present interests. Being gathered within that and separate from it, and having to do with spiritual realities, it will be likelier to decide with justice and wisdom. But still the Church!—we know that here is a sphere beyond it. It cannot decide for any Man what God in his Law requires of HIM. The infinite trains of error and of mischief that have followed its attempt, open broadly before us whenever we look back. We know how the Church thus appealed to has grown arrogant; how it has held itself above the Soul, above the State, the very vicegerent of Jehovah on the earth; how it has blasted with its anathemas, and crushed with its fury, the pious and the steadfast that have risen up against it; and how, departing in this from its legitimate sphere, it has fallen into all most diverse errors;—how the Church of one age has decreed and enjoined what the Church of another age has rejected with scorn; how the Church in one land has conformed itself to laws, which the Church in another land has resisted as infamous.—We know, in a word, as Protestant Christians, that though the Church in any State, as the company of the enlightened and regenerate within it, is more worthy than the State, in the aggregate of its population, to decide what is Right for the individual Man, even it is *not* competent. It is not such in its constitution, it is not such in its perpetually transmitted Divine Authority, that it can speak to any man in the name of the God who made and who will judge him. God

never meant that it should do so. If he had he would have said so, with infallible clearness. In the course of his Providence, along the history of the Past, he has built up a barrier against this doctrine, in the fearful accumulation of its results, which it would seem to be impossible for any to overpass. There is not one of us, within these walls to-day, aware of his relations to God and to Eternity, and knowing that his destiny was poised upon his decision, who would give up his conviction to the authority of a Church. There is that in the Soul which instinctively revolts at it.

But if neither the State nor the Church is authorized to interpret God's Law for his subject, where his Word has not in terms decided it, how *shall* it be known? Who shall decide in regard to what it is? There can be but one answer. The Man himself, to whom that Law is addressed and adapted, upon whom is laid the responsibility of the decision, and whose personal destiny is depending upon it, He must decide. He must decide, in the use of the constitutional power which God has given him for this purpose; the power which we denominate the Conscience. Not by an act of the Will, merely, determining what he *will* do at any hazard; not in the impulse of Desire, merely, and personal inclination; not in the use, simply, of the practical Understanding, as logically analyzing the relations of acts, and the results that will flow from them; assuredly not in the mere impulse of the Sensibility, emotively feeling for present suffering;—but in the exercise of the Conscience; the Sense of Right; the Power within us which bears witness to the Truth, which mirrors upon its clearness the principles and the claims of the Rectitude which God loves, and to which God appeals, with both his Law as obligatory and his Salvation as needful. In the calm and intelligent use of this spiritual Power, the Man must decide on the requirements of God's Rule.

The existence of such a Power within himself, no man can doubt; except as he is moved by interest or constrained by a theory, or has buried his faculty under years of misuse. It might be shown, if there were need, to be a necessary condition of personal accountableness; as well as a noble illustration of God's wisdom. Its reality is recognized in consciousness, daily. When we feel the sensation of Penitence for Sin, we know that it is not Regret for Loss. It is radically and totally different from that. It is different, constitutionally, from an intellectual apprehension of inexpediency and mistake; or even from a conviction of hazard and exposure. It is more central than these, in the heart; more poignant; more permanent. It wrings the soul with a deeper power. *Why* does it this? Simply because the Conscience is in it. It shows that we have a conviction of Right, a power of apprehending that in its simple and permanent unity, which is radically diverse from the power of calculating results and advantages. It shows that there is that imbedded in the soul, as central in it as its own existence, to which the Right makes its appeal; and which cannot do otherwise than respond to its claim.—We see the same fact illustrated in the deep and joyful gladness that fills the heart, the

“peace serene,  
“As light in the sun, throned”

in the mind, when we are conscious of doing right; when the Conscience, that is, is satisfied and approving. And we see the same in one of its most fearful and startling exhibitions, when this peace has vanished; when even penitence for sin has given way to a feeling more mighty and overwhelming; when Remorse has assumed the control of the soul. That is not Fear. It is not Grief. It is not the pain of a felt incapacity for the accomplishment of

**Duty.** It is Conviction of sin, now fixed and irremediable ; a consciousness of Wrong, committed and irreparable ; a sense of the free irrevocable violation of sacred obligations. It comes from the Conscience, now erect and avenging, although so long despised and trampled. Under its power the soul is sometimes broken into the dust. There have been men who have ended their life, to escape from its anguish. The flickering glare of the fires of Hell, may already be seen in it.

In all these exercises we see revealed the Power of Conscience ; original and permanent in every man. It is distinct from the Understanding, which deals with truth ; entirely distinct from the susceptibility to Emotion, from the Fancy, from the Will. It is the highest Power, within us. It is in each whom God has made. It is instinctive and intuitive in its decisions, rather than argumentative. It speaks with an authority which no man can help feeling. It may be debased or perverted by sin ; just as the intellect may be, the imagination, the sensibility. But if left to form unbiassed decisions, if followed when it guides us, and especially if enlightened and educated by the truth, and pervaded as it may be by the Spirit of God,—it points to the Right, on its throne in the Heavens, more unerringly than the needle to the star in the North. We recognise its existence in others than ourselves ; and even when we are certain of the perversion of the desire in those with whom we are associated, and are not confident of the soundness of their judgment, we rely on a response from their principle of Conscience. If our just appeal to that is not met, we reckon from it to the degree of their depravity. We use, even unconsciously, this discovered insusceptibility of the Conscience to the Right, as a graduating rod by which to measure the completeness of their wickedness. We feel the almost *deadness* in sin of the soul which we address.

It is scarcely needful to show—it is almost humiliating to be obliged to argue—that the existence of this faculty is recognised in the Scriptures. Paul recognised it, when he wrote thus to the Romans: “For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law [the Law, that is, written on stone, which Moses gave], do by nature the things contained in the Law, these having not the Law are a Law unto themselves. Which show the work of the Law written in their hearts [in their interior and spiritual being]; their CONSCIENCE also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another.” He recognised the same power, again, when he spoke of himself to the Corinthians, as “not handling the word of God deceitfully, but commending himself to every man’s Conscience, in the sight of God.” The Saviour recognised it, when he simply turned his eye upon Peter, after Peter’s denial of him; and the Apostle *felt* it, when “he went out, and wept bitterly.” Christ recognised it, also, when he put his charge of substantial adultery against the Pharisees: “And they being convicted by their own Conscience [which made itself heard over the violence of passion and the stubbornness of pride] went out, *one by one*.”—Throughout the Scriptures, the recognitions and illustrations of this Power occur. They would not otherwise have been true to man’s structure.

How characteristic is that record of the first transgressors, that ‘when they heard the voice of the Lord God in the garden, they were afraid, and hid themselves.’ The consciousness of Guilt had unnerved the will. How clearly comes before us the remorse of the Brothers of Joseph, through the beautiful aptness of the Oriental narrative: “They said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear.” It was years after the act. No voice from the skies had broken upon them,



recalling their guilt. The sense of it was *within*. It came out instantly at the presence of adversity; "and therefore [said they] is this distress come upon us." So Pharaoh felt, after all his hardening of his heart, when he not only sent forth God's people to avert his judgments, but said unto Moses and Aaron: "I have sinned this time. The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." So David felt, when the prophet of God rebuked him. So Judas himself felt, when he went out and hanged himself, under the intolerable burden of the Consciousness of Guilt.—It would occupy hours to enumerate the instances in which the Scriptures respond, incidentally or directly, to this Power in man. They show it as a monitor. They show it as an avenger. They show it ineradicable by any force of the will. They show it restraining from wrong, and impelling to Duty. They show it, when violated, the source of a terrible self-reproach; the centre of a pain too deep, almost, to be endured; in which is the prophecy of Retribution and Judgment. They show it as the Power to which God chiefly appeals. They reckon it as well nigh the last result of persistent wickedness—the sign of the Death to which sin tends—when it can be said of a man that being unjust "he knoweth no shame;" that his "Conscience is seared with a hot iron." And in all this the Scriptures but respond to man's Consciousness; and by recognising and meeting the powers that are in us, demonstrate their origin with Him who made us.

There *is*, then, this principle of Conscience, a Sense of Right, a Power that responds to the principles of God's Law, imbedded in Man, as an element of his being.—It is a universal principle; implanted in every man at the start of his existence, and which he cannot obliterate, however he may wish it. Though he sin to the last and remorselessly on the Earth, it will master him again in the scenes of the

Future.—It is a principle that is natively impelled toward Rectitude; to decide harmoniously with the Law of its author. The heart is not so impelled; the desires; the sensibility to enjoyment. But the Conscience is. It is in agreement, by its constitution, with Right and Justice; and therefore God appeals to it with his Law. If in any case it decides wrongly, it is because it has been systematically misused, or is warped by the appeal of great advantage. It does not often decide wrongly. Men who differ on everything else, will almost always agree on what is ‘right, *in itself*.’—It is a principle susceptible of such culture and developement, that, with this, it shall certainly decide aright. Being informed by the Truth, and exalted and enlightened by the Spirit of God, coming into communion with Him its author, and receiving of the impulses which he will give it, it may speak with entire authority and justness. It is the fault of the man who follows its impulse, if it has not been thus instructed and trained.—It is the only principle that can decide for Man, what Equity requires of him, where the specific declaration of God is wanting. No other man, no company, can decide it. His sense of personal accountability and peril, his knowledge of the destinies which are pending upon his decision, his instinctive conviction of the fitness of things, and the impulses that are in him as deep as life—forbid him to rest on another’s decision. He cannot be satisfied to give over to another, he knows that he *cannot* give over to another, this inmost responsibility. He lays aside the crown of his manhood, if he attempts to do it.

In the exercise of this spiritual Power, then, a Man must decide when the Law which God has given him is in conflict with the requirement of the State. Not by his Desire, I say again, is this to be discovered; not by his sensibility to mere present suffering; not by his perception of probable advantages; not by his Understanding, as

simply considering the connections of action ; but by the Conscience ;—that noble and spiritual faculty, in which is the image of God his author ; which is the vital and permanent pillar, standing erect and pointing toward Holiness, amid the fall of the desires ; to which God appeals with his Truth and his Law ; into whose hand if disobeyed, he puts the terrible scourge of Remorse. — He must not decide impetuously and rashly ; under the influence, too much, of excited emotion. He must not decide without taking counsel of the judgment, and reckoning the relations that shall circulate from the action. He must seek the advice of the wise and the disinterested ; though he must not accept their opinion as authority. He must consult the preservation of all interests that are valuable, and the promotion of those that are intrinsically worthy ; though he must not yield Right to mere outward Advantage. He must study to free himself from the influence of Passion ; from the guidings of prejudice, or of pride, or of ambition ; from all the allurements of self-interest and of profit. He must study God's word, and investigate it patiently ; endeavoring to gather its lessons into the heart. He must seek to become partaker of the spirit and sharer of the light that are treasured in Christ, and through union with him to feel as he feels. He must go up to God, in prayer for his guidance, and seek illumination from the Spirit of Holiness ; and enter, so far as he can, the atmosphere of Heaven, and of the Equity that is there. He must bring up the Conscience to the level of God's Law.—And then he must decide ; and **STAND**, on that decision ! as Daniel did, before the king ; as Stephen did, before the council ; as martyrs have done, in every age. Though a thousand be against him, if conscientious convictions are full and clear, he must not yield them. Though friends are discovered, and ties are broken, and interests are damaged, and hopes are overthrown—he must stand on his

Conviction ; for God has given to him the Conscience, that so he may do.

My Friends, this is right in itself. It is expedient, too, and wise. 'The arrangement of God which makes a man's Conscience his guide to action, is beneficent every way.—It is beneficent for the Individual. Would you educate a man best ? Tell him that he, a responsible being, and an heir of Eternity, must decide for himself on a question of Duty!—that against the pressure of interest and the community, against the appeals of indulgence and repose, as accountable to God, he must look for the Right, and steadfastly maintain it ! You have put him upon a work that will draw out his manhood as the light and the air draw the beauty out of nature. You have set him to a task in the accomplishment of which his energy of purpose, his depth of religious conviction and sentiment, his vigor and enterprise of mental action, his moral capacity, clearness and force, will all be developed. It cannot be otherwise. You put the man in precisely that position where every force is called to the noblest exertion that it can make ; where everything that is manliest finds legitimate scope ; where the man, if he does what you set him to do, asserts his prerogative, as superior to mere interest, and capable of the Godlike. The results of that system will be seen in the end,—as with the Puritans in this country, as with the Huguenots in France, as with the persecuted band in the Waldensian valleys,—in a purer piety ; in a nobler self-devotion ; in a grander and more powerful grasp of the principles of Duty ; in a more exalted communion with God in his Holiness ; in a higher disregard of the blandishments of Time ; in a mightier unfolding of all spiritual force ; in a deeper impression on the history of the World.

It is beneficent for the State, as for the Persons who compose it, that Conscience thus decide. It does not tend to anarchy, as has falsely been said. It makes no allowance for that sudden and rash resistance that might arise out of interest. It requires that he who sets himself against the State and its powers, shall do it, not in the heat of a Passion that sustains him; not in the desperate rebound from an intolerable oppression; but in the calm and principled resolution, which arises from the conviction of Equity and Right; that he do it as an individual, only seeking to inform the consciences of others. The certainty then is, beforehand, that only the best and most thoughtful will resist, all the pressure of advantage being steadily against them; and that the resistance will go forward just as fast as the Conviction. If the State yields to such influence it will be benefitted by it. If it does not, but adheres to injustice and wrong, then it ought in the end to be broken before it.—‘The State!’ What is it? It is not lands, or ports, or capitals. It is the MEN, who form and guide it. Where these are elevated, the State is flourishing. Let facts then testify of the tendencies of this system. Where the decree of an Infallible Church has been received as decisive in the questions of Right—much more, where the doctrine has obtained of a passive and unquestioning Obedience to the State—what has been the issue? I put it to you, my Friends. In Italy;—in Russia;—under the iron system of the despots of France;—has liberty advanced? has intelligence been diffused? has morality grown purer? has religion gained power? has Right been done? has the State been ennobled? has even a just stability of Government been secured and established? Nay, verily! But in all these the reverse! Wherever the doctrine has stepped, it has blighted. Wherever it has had sway, it has turned men into machines. The final revolution has been the more

tremendous for its oppressions. The nation has degenerated to the level of its condition, or else the furious rush of a people that had borne till endurance became impossible has swept before it the palace and the throne.—And on the other hand take any Man, take any People, in the developement of the system which nurtures and educates Conscience, as the guide to man's Duty, as the Interpreter of God's Law for him, as the authority he must bow to whatever man decrees, and Liberty there advances. The State grows in power, as its citizens are enlightened. It becomes settled and established, on the basis of Equity. Follow it in its career; and its progress shall be traced in beneficence and peace. From first to last its orbit shall be an orbit that brightens with the glow of knowledge and of heroism; and that closes in the splendor of a still culminating Glory.

Here we have reached the end of our discussion; and here we see in clearness, I think, the truth for which we started. We see the Ground and the Extent of the obligation of Man to obey Civil Law. He is bound to obey it, because it is beneficent that Society should exist; and that cannot exist without officers and rules. He is bound to obey it, because God ordains the existence of organized Society; in the very constitution of Man, his creature, sympathetic, dependent, receptive, communicative; in the course of his Providence, which brings each man into being amid Society; in the precepts of his Word, which command as in the text this general duty.—He is bound to obey it, so long as and wherever it does not conflict with the Law God has given him; so long as it refrains from enjoining iniquity. Within these limits, whatever it decrees, even that which injures us in person or in goods, if so be it stop short of the injury that is deepest—if it does not take life

without cause, or break up the family which God has organized, or deprive us of Liberty, that

“ Sacred tree  
Fenced round, and kept from violation free,  
Whose smallest spray rent off, we never prize  
At less than life,”

—we are bound to submit to. Though it confiscate our property, though it derange our employments and take from us our livelihood—it is better that we yield, and repair the injustice. But when it commands us to do a wrong act, or to refrain from a right one, its authority stops. It has reached the line that it cannot pass over. We are bound by an authority that is higher than its, to disobey it. As the subjects of God, and destined to Eternity, we are bound to do the Right, which the law forbids us ; and to refrain from the Wrong to which it urges us.—And on this Right the Man must decide ; in the exercise of Conscience ; deliberately, prayerfully, on his personal responsibility, but firmly and finally. He cannot throw off the decision upon another. God looks on HIM, and gives to HIM his command, and offers to HIM his Spirit and Truth ; and HE must act. If he does what is right, then God will honor him. But if he does the wrong, because the State requires him to do it,—it is as certain as that God abhors Iniquity and loves the Right—as certain as that God is not limited by man’s law—that he shall perish, when God appeareth !

And now, my Friends, let us briefly but frankly apply this to the Law which concerns all our thoughts ; the Law which requires us to return the black man to his Master at the South. What is our duty under that ? We are all equally interested to decide this aright, and to do precisely what God would have us ; for we shall all, together, meet

God in Judgment. I am as deeply interested as any of you to decide it prudently; for the safety of the State. My pecuniary interest in the preservation of the integrity of the National Union is not as large, of course, as yours; but my social and professional position, my pecuniary support, my present happiness, my hopes of future effort and good, depend as much as yours on that. It would be no less hard for me than for you to enter the Prison, if the Law called for that. It would be far more hard for me than for you to pay the penalty affixed to disobedience. What then is our Duty—yours, and mine—under this Law?

The case stands thus; and one example may illustrate all. Some forty-five years since a lad was stolen upon the Coast of Africa. He was captured by force, loaded with chains, and brought across the ocean—through that terrible Middle-Passage, which has become but a synonyme for the extremest suffering. He was placed upon a plantation in a Southern State; either by his captor, or by one to whom that captor transferred him. He has toiled there for years. He has finally escaped from the force that has held him, and has come to the North. He is living, and has been living for years, in the midst of our society. He is married and has a family. He has accumulated some property. He is a Christian in his convictions, and a Christian in his purpose; a Christian, too, in his outward profession. — If it be said that this is a strong case, I reply that it is proper to take a positive case to test a principle; that this is a possible case, in its every particular; that there are probably men now at the North, called ‘fugitives from service,’ who actualize it all; and that the principle which covers it, will cover all that can occur;—for as related to the intrinsic equity of the return of the man to bondage, it makes no difference whether he has been in that bondage for five years or for forty; whether he was himself enslaved upon Africa, or is the child



of the man so violently enforced. No man can show the point, at ten years or at fifty, where what is wrong at the first becomes changed into Right, by the force of continuance ; where oppression and injustice, having ripened for years, open out into the beauty and majesty of Virtue. Especially can no man show an error in Blackstone, when he argues so unanswerably, that "if neither captivity, nor the sale of oneself, can, by the law of Nature and of Reason, reduce the Parent to slavery [as he has just demonstrated], *much less* can they reduce the Offspring."—If the man I have referred to ought not to be returned to bondage, then *no* man should be.

The Man, thus dwelling by my side, is claimed by the person whom he formerly served. He is pursued by the officer. He is in peril of being taken. He comes to me for help and shelter, and for counsel in flight. The law of Congress says to me : "You shall not give it." The law of Congress says to me : "You shall grasp that neighbor, at the call of the officer, and deliver him to his pursuers."\*

\* "SEC. 5. *And be it further enacted*, That it shall be the duty of all marshals and deputy marshals to obey and execute all warrants and precepts issued under the provisions of this act, when to them directed ; \* \* \* \* and all good citizens are hereby commanded to aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution of this law, whenever their services may be required, as aforesaid, for that purpose ; and said warrants shall run and be executed by said officers anywhere in the State within which they are issued.

"SEC. 7. *And be it further enacted*, That any person who shall knowingly and willingly obstruct, hinder, or prevent such claimant, his agent or attorney, or any person or persons lawfully assisting him, her, or them, from arresting such fugitive from service or labor, either with or without process as aforesaid ; \* \* \* \* or shall aid, abet, or assist such person, so owing service or labor as aforesaid, directly or indirectly, to escape from such claimant, his agent or attorney, or other person or persons, legally authorized as aforesaid ; or shall harbor or conceal such fugitive, so as to prevent the discovery and arrest of such person, after notice or knowledge of the fact that such person was a fugitive from service or

The question for me is, 'Is that law a Right one?' Not, 'Was it passed with the proper formalities; or, Has it been certified by the proper officers?' Not, even, as a primary question, 'Is it agreeable to the laws that preceded and that gird it; or, Is it likely to be enforced by the arm of the State?' The question is other and higher than these. It concerns me as immortal, and a subject of God. 'Is this law Right? Is it equitable and just? Does it agree with the Law which GOD has given me, when he tells me to love my neighbor as myself? If I seize that Man, and deliver him up,—if I refuse to shelter and to help him,—shall I do that which God approves? which I can meet with joy at the Judgment, when human enactments shall have vanished and been forgotten?'

In answer to this question, there comes to me the Law which God gave to Israel: "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee; He shall dwell *with* thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: THOU SHALT NOT OPPRESS HIM." This specific requirement may have terminated upon the Hebrews; but if its principle were right, even in that darkened and barbarous age, how can it be otherwise under the blaze of Christianity?

But leaving this special expression of God's will, and coming to the matter directly in hand, with the calm and clear examination of the Conscience;—To WHAT am I required to send this Man back? To the endurance of a System whose character I will not exaggerate by a word of de-

labor as aforesaid, shall, for either of said offences, be subject to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars, and imprisonment not exceeding six months;  
 \* \* \* \* \* and shall, moreover, forfeit and pay, by way of civil damages, to the party injured by such illegal conduct, the sum of one thousand dollars for each fugitive so lost as aforesaid;" etc.

scription overwrought and fanatical, but which no man can contemplate as a philanthropist without shuddering ; of a System,—as defined in its statutes and laws, drawn up in the calmness of legislative acts, and expounded in the solemnity of judicial decisions,—which puts the Man into the power of the Master ; to be used by him as he will, only his life being preserved ; to be sold by him when he will, and to whomsoever he pleases ; to have his wife and his children taken from him and sold, at the pleasure of the other—the Wife that is as dear and sacred to him as yours to you ; the Children that are as precious as yours to you or mine to me, when they prattle upon the knee, or nestle into the bosom. It is a System that forbids its subject to be taught to read or to write ; that keeps him ignorant, and depends on that ignorance for its own preservation ; that directly debars him from accumulation and progress, making all that he acquires the property of the Master ; that dashes his every pleasure, by the sense of its insecurity ; that takes the joy from every hope, by hanging its accomplishment on the will of another ; that darkens every prospect by the shadow of a constant and inevitable fear ;—that takes away the Bible, by legislative authority ; and yet that leaves to its captive no rational happiness but that which is found in the hope of a Hereafter. It is to *this* System, that I am to send the Man back ; and it will be administered toward him with double rigor, because he has once escaped its grasp.

The Man will not go. If I could persuade him to return, as Paul did Onesimus to his qualified condition, to one who would receive him ‘not now as a servant, but above a servant, as a Brother, beloved’—then my duty might be plain. But he will not go thus. He has tasted a bondage that Onesimus probably never knew. The master who is after him does not ask him to come thus. He calls him again to the rice-field and the plantation ; as a ‘ Chattel personal.’

The Man implores me not to send him. Why *should* I send him? WHY should I do him this mortal injury? He is my Brother, by creation; and my Brother, by Redemption. Both of us are responsible to one Heavenly Father. Both of us are looking for one Eternity. Why should I send him to a bondage that he abhors?—It is a bondage not founded in Equity, not accepted by himself, and not obligatory upon his Conscience. In the forum of Equity, no other person has “property” in him. He was stolen at the first; and the point cannot be shown at which that theft and its consequences, the Man being always at hand to assert his right to Himself, became established in Equity. Nay;—deeper than this there comes a principle. God made that Man in His own image; for His service and glory. He has made him Immortal; and in point of faculty on a level with others; a sharer of the nature which Christ has glorified; a fit recipient of his Truth and his Spirit. How then can another have “property” in him? Is it by the express grant of his Creator? It is not pretended. Is it given by the fact of proximity and neighborhood? Then he has in turn the same property in the other. It is simply the effect of superior FORCE. All analysis of it ends at precisely this point. The Master has held that Man because he *could* do it, and never otherwise; because his mind or his muscles were the stronger, and because his companions have lent him aid. But this gives him no right, in Equity, to his captive. If it did, then the Man becoming stronger would own him in turn. If it did, then the Strongest in the State would own all; and an absolute Despotism be the only just government. The Master does not ‘own’ the Man he is after. He *cannot* do so. The Man has his own endowment of faculty; his own responsibility to God his Maker; his own intrinsic and natural Rights—to himself, and to his powers. Except by crime he does not lose these. He is accountable for them

to God and to the Future. He cannot be the property of another, his equal. Money may buy gold, or lands, or horses, or brutes, but it cannot buy the manhood and the force that God hath given to HIM. It is, as Brougham has said, "a wild and guilty fantasy, that Man can have property in Man."\*

The question recurs then, Why shall I send the man to this unjust bondage? The fact that he has suffered it so long already, is a reason why I should *not*. The fact that he is hunted, afflicted, poor, and that his pursuers are strong, is just the reason why I should aid him. God tells me to love him, as I love myself; to do to him what I would that he in turn should do unto me. Why shall I not HELP him, in his struggle for the Rights that God gave him indelibly, when he made him a Man? There is nothing to prevent, but the simple requirement of my equals in the State; the parchment of the Law, which they have written. But where will that parchment be, when I meet this my Brother in the Judgment? Where will that parchment be, when Christ shall say to me, with my Eternity depending on his words, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat! I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink! I was naked, and ye clothed me not! I was a stranger, and ye took me not in!—Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my Brethren—ye did it not to ME"!

Nay! NAY! my Friends! I cannot do this essential Injustice! Though the commands of the law were a hun-

\* Or as Blackstone expresses it: "Those rights then which God and Nature have established, and are therefore called natural rights, such as are life and liberty, need not the aid of human laws to be more effectually invested in every man than they are; neither do they receive any additional strength when declared by the municipal laws to be inviolable. On the contrary NO HUMAN LEGISLATURE has power to abridge or destroy them, unless the man shall himself commit some act that amounts to a forfeiture." *Introd. to Comment. Sec. 2, \* 54.*

dred-fold more stringent, I would not touch a hair of that man's head! Though its penalties were accumulated to tenfold greatness, they should not shut my doors against him!—I will not resist the law by force and violence. I will even advise the Man to flee it if he can, and not resist it, although it hurls him back upon his right of Self-Defence. But I *will not* obey it, unless by bearing its penalties. The man who does otherwise is in peril of his Soul. For Eternity is grander than Time and its scenes! The Eye that shall search our life at the Judgment, is more terrible than that of the human Tribunal! and he that hath done Wrong, shall meet it there! The omniscience of God will never forget it!—I do not find that my fathers covenanted that I should do this act; but if they did it must be cancelled. I cannot renew a covenant for such crime.—It is said that the Union is imperilled by such refusal. But consequences are doubtful, and Right is definite. It is right to do what God's Law bids us, in relation to our brother, though the World shake beneath us! I know the results that seem poised upon the Union. But if that is righteous and is worthy of preservation, it cannot require such iniquity to its support. God certainly would not save it by the disregard of his Law. And he that does the Right, under the government of God, is always safe. He falls in with the lines of God's purposes and requirement. He works toward the ultimate good of ALL! He is in harmony with that System whose law is Holiness.

We must NEVER do wrong! It is right to obey magistrates, as the officers of society, so long as they rule justly. "Put them in mind," says the Apostle, and I to-day repeat and urge it, "to be subject to principalities, to obey magistrates, and to be ready to *every* good work." But God has given us a Law that is primary; that concerns us as immortal; that supercedes every other. When human

Law conflicts with this, it is Duty to disobey that. We must say with Peter ; “ We ought to obey God rather than men.” And God’s Law is—decisive, unequivocal, extending always to each of *us*—revealed to Conscience as Light is to the eye !—“ THOU shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart ; and Thou shalt love thy Neighbor AS THYSELF.” There is none other Commandment—on Earth, or in Heaven—that is greater than these.

My Hearers, let us take this Truth as our Guide, our Counsellor, and our steadfast support. It is the Truth ! the Truth of God ! the Truth in which the Scriptures agree ! the Truth that shall stand, when we have fallen ! It is no *new* Truth, as I said at the outset. It is as old as Christianity. It has had such testimony to its reality and its value, as almost no other has ever gained. It has beamed like a star over every martyr-fire. It has throbbed as a life in every Reformer ; in Wickliffe ; in Huss ; in Luther ; in the Pilgrims. The costliest blood of earth, has been its free and noble tribute. The grandest endeavor that human annals have ever marked, has been given to its support. Men have risen up against tyrannies, have overthrown oppressions, have established free States, have illustrated Christianity, have wrought Immortality, under the forces which it has given them. Political interests may heave against it, but they cannot overthrow it. The clouds of sophistry may hide it for a time, but not forever. The fury of the violent, who are bound to the oppressor, may be poured upon itself, and be spent upon its advocates ; but that “signifieth Nothing.” The Truth is God’s. He honors and will aid it. With every advancing Christian Age, it shall be seen more brightly. Old as it is, it is not worn. “Its radiant brow doth wear the Morning Star.” It shall ultimately triumph. You and I may not see that.

The grass may grow above our graves, before this Truth has risen to its throne. But it shall come to that at last. It shall be incorporate into Law. It shall be recognised in Letters. Its forces shall mould society anew. Then shall oppression and war be past. Then every human law shall bear upon its front the beauty of the Divine. Then governments shall be free, and just, and Christian. Then prayers, and tears, the struggles of the faithful, the endurance of the devoted, the stake of the confessor, the Cross of Christ, shall have come unto their fruitage. Then Peace and Equity shall fill the earth; and every act of Right, done in the Past, be met in its result. And then shall Christ be King of men!

“Far, like the comet’s way through infinite Space,  
Stretches that long untravelled track of Light.”

Oh! in that day may it be found that you and I have labored for the Right! have given of our force to the supremacy of Justice! have counted all as nothing in the comparison of Duty! and thus have striven for human welfare!—Yea! may it be found, amid that sweeter, nobler Day, to which this shall arise, and in whose Glory this shall end—when we shall stand before the Infinite, and look down on the Past from the far eminence of Eternity—that we have done throughout our life what God commanded; that human law has never bowed us to disobedience of Him; that we have actualized his will on Earth, have honored him as our great Sovereign, have sought the guidance which he could give us, have used for him our utmost force, have poured our life into his work, and now are ready to enter into Rest!



## NOTE.

It cannot be needful to add citations from the writings of those to whom the Christian Church looks with reverence and love, to show that the Doctrine of the preceding Discourse is not novel or strange; that it is accepted by those who stand chief among moralists. Authority can scarcely add to the appeal which it makes of itself to the Conscience; and the fact that others have maintained it, must be familiar to all. But at the same time there can be no impertinence in adding such evidences of its soundness and propriety. And the following, selected from a large number compiled by a friend for another occasion, are so much to his purpose that the author takes the liberty to present them. They are purposely taken from writers of widely known religious views, of different relations, and times, and lands. But it will be seen that they agree perfectly in their teaching.

Calvin writes in his *Institutes of Religion*, B. iv., chap 20, sec 32, as follows :

"In the obedience which we have shown to be due to the authority of governors, it is always necessary to make one exception, and that is entitled to our first attention,—that it do not seduce us from our obedience to Him, to whose will the desires of all kings ought to be subject, to whose decrees all their commands ought to yield, to whose majesty all theirsceptres ought to submit. If they command anything against Him, it ought not to have the least attention; nor, in this case, ought we to pay any regard to all that dignity attached to magistrates; to which no injury is done when it is subjected to the unrivalled and supreme power of God. On this principle Daniel denied that he had committed any crime against the king in disobeying his impious decree (Dan vi. 22); because the king had exceeded the limits of his office, and had not only done an injury to men, but, by raising his arm against God, had degraded his own authority. \* \* \* \* \* So far is any praise from being due to the pretext of humility, with which courtly flatterers excuse themselves and deceive the unwary, when they deny that it is lawful for them to refuse compliance with any command of their kings: as if God had resigned his right to mortal men, when He made them rulers of mankind; or as if earthly power were diminished by being subordinated to its Author, before whom even the principalities of heaven tremble with awe. I know what great and present danger awaits this constancy, for kings cannot bear to be disregarded without the greatest indignation; and "the wrath of a king," says Solomon, "is as messengers of death." But since this edict has been proclaimed by that celestial herald, Peter, "We ought to obey God rather than men;"—let us console ourselves with this

thought, that we truly perform the obedience which God requires of us, when we suffer anything rather than deviate from piety. And that our hearts may not fail us, Paul stimulates us with another consideration—that Christ has redeemed us at the immense price which our redemption cost him, that we may not be submissive to the corrupt desires of men, much less be slaves to their impiety.”

Paley—not likely to err, certainly, on the side of an extravagant regard for the Ideal Right—speaks on this wise, in his discussion of the Duty of Obedience to civil Government; referring to the mode in which the Scriptures develop it:

“They (the Scriptures) inculcate the *duty*, they do not describe the *extent* of it. They enforce the obligations by the proper sanctions of Christianity, without intending either to enlarge or contract, without considering, indeed, the limits by which it is bounded. This is also the method in which the same apostles enjoin the duty of servants to their masters, of children to their parents, of wives to their husbands: ‘Servants, be subject to your masters’—‘Children, obey your parents in all things’—‘Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands.’ The same concise and absolute form of expression occurs in all these precepts; the same silence as to any exceptions or distinctions; yet no one doubts that the commands of masters, parents, and husbands, are often so immoderate, unjust, and inconsistent with other obligations, that they both *MAY* and *OUGHT TO BE* resisted.”

Robert Hall has given the following emphatic and concise expression of the truth:

“The limits of every duty must be determined by its *reasons*, and the only ones assigned *here* (Rom. xiii.), or that *can* be assigned for submission to civil authority, are its *tendency to do good*; wherever therefore this shall cease to be the case, submission becomes absurd, having no longer any *rational view*. But at what time this evil shall be judged to have arrived, or what remedy it may be proper to apply, Christianity does not decide, but leaves to be determined by an appeal to Natural Reason and Right.”

Dr. Hodge, in his comments upon Romans 13th, has made a very express and decisive statement of the principles developed in the foregoing Discourse:

“No command to do anything morally wrong can be binding; nor can any which transcends the rightful authority of the power whence it emanates. What that rightful authority is, must be determined by the institutions and laws of the land, or from prescription and usage, or from the nature and design of the office with which the magistrate is invested. The right of deciding on all these points, and determining *where* the obligation to obedience ceases, and the duty of resistance begins, *MUST, FROM THE NATURE OF THE CASE, REST WITH THE SUBJECT, AND NOT WITH THE RULER*. The apostles and early Christians decided this point *FOR THEMSELVES*, and did not leave the decision with the Jewish or Roman authorities. Like all other questions of duty, it is to be decided on our responsibility to God and our fellow-men.”

Such quotations might be accumulated to almost any extent.